

## Blackberries For Supper

By C. S. LEWIS

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Aunt Judy Taylor, relief of Hiriam Taylor, had come on from Iowa to live with her brother and his family for the rest of her life. She had sold all her earthly possessions in the west for a thousand dollars in cash, and a few days after her arrival she had turned this money over to her brother James, with the remark:

"Now, James, this is all yours but \$200. That \$200 is for Clara when she gets married. It's for her to make a wedding tower on. When I was married I wanted to make a wedding tower to Niagara falls, but Hiriam hadn't but \$13 to go on." I've always said that if one of my nieces ever got married she should see Niagara falls if she had to wear one petticoat for the next five years."

Clara was the daughter of the brother and his wife, and she already had a beau. He was a young man from the nearest village, and after seeing him two or three times Aunt Judy said to the girl:

"Clara, that feller of yours will never set the river afire, but there's nothing mean about him. He'll provide a good table and have plenty of wood at the back door, and I guess he will be just as well as if he was swelling around and telling what a great man he was. I'm judging him by his nose. When you see a man with his nose humped up in the middle you can set him down for a good tempered man."

The brother put the money in bank at the village, but after a little Aunt Judy began to worry about it. She was assured that the bank was safe, and telling what a great man he was. I'm judging him by his nose. When you see a man with his nose humped up in the middle you can set him down for a good tempered man."

"Dum-dum, James—I dunno. Of course, it's you I'm sorry now, but I'm sorry I didn't see the banker before you gave it to him. I think I'll have you drive me to town some day, so that I can get a look at him."

"But Scott's bank has been here for twenty years," persisted the brother.

"Yes, I suppose it has, but out in Iowa they caught a man stealing pumpkin who'd lived an honest life for sixty years."

"I wouldn't like to see you lose your money, and if anything happened to Clara's \$200 I'd have a fit."

"She's got to make a bridal tower to Niagara falls or I won't see her married. Folks have told me that more water runs over the falls in a day than would run a mill dam for a week and that there's a roar going on just like half a dozen bulls bellerin' in the distance. I want to get a look at that banker. I can tell in a minute whether he's honest or not."

A few days later she was driven to the village and an errand made to the bank.

"James," Aunt Judy said while they were driving home, "do you know that a woman knows forty times as much as a man?"

"I hadn't heard of it," was the reply.

"Well, you hear of it now. That banker hasn't an honest man. It won't be a year before he'll bust up and leave you all in the lurch."

"Pooh! Pooh! Mr. Scott has the confidence of hundreds of people, and I don't worry over my money any more than as if it was buried in the cellar. You mustn't get such notions into your head."

"It's no notion, James. Out in Iowa we had three different hired men on the farm who turned out to be thieves, and each of them looked like that banker. I never in the world would buy a thing of a tin peddler until I had looked at his eyes. There's something in them I always can tell. I wish that money of Clara's was out of his hands."

"Come now, Judy; don't be silly. I'd trust Mr. Scott the same as my own brother."

"All right. We'll say no more about it. Only if Clara is disappointed in seeing Niagara falls I shan't be the same woman I was. They say that when you stand and look at all that water pouring over, the chills go up your back and you don't feel know high to a grasshopper. Isn't there any way to catch that water in rain barrels and store it up agin a drought?"

"Might be," replied the brother, who had a very hazy opinion of things outside his own township.

At intervals of every two weeks during the next eight months Aunt Judy came back to the subject of the banker, and her worry never ceased. It was treated as if "notion" and not taken seriously.

In due time Clara's been popped the question and was accepted and the day set, and Aunt Judy was so busy sewing that there were times when she almost forgot her fears. It lacked but two weeks of their marriage day when the brother drove to the village on an errand. He came back looking as white as a dead man. Aunt Judy, who was the first to see him, gave him a long look and said:

"Waah, don't I tell you so?"

"Scott's bank has busted!" he groaned as he sat down.

"Of course it has. I knew it would. How could you lost?"

"About \$700."

"And Clara's \$200, is gone with it! Only two weeks before she is to set out on her bridal tower, and how is she going to see Niagara falls?"

"I feel like hanging myself!" groaned the brother.

"So will a heap of others. Next time some of you may believe what an old

woman from Iowa has to say. What did you hear about the bank?"

"Beatt took all the money last night and ran away."

"Humph! Was, you can sit here and sigh and groan, and Hannah and Clara can go upstairs and cry over it. I've got to keep outdoors and walk around or bust. I'll go down to the woods, where nobody'll hear me gritting my teeth."

Aunt Judy went down through the barnyard and across a meadow and presently found herself at the fringe of the cool green woods. She was much put out and was musing as hard words as an old woman ever does, when she caught sight of a blackberry bush loaded with ripe fruit. The spirit of thrift came to the surface at once.

"We've got to have supper if a dozen banks burst," she said to herself, "and these blackberries are what we want for sas. It's funny that no one has said anything about them."

She unfastened her sunbonnet and began to strip off the berries. She went from bush to bush and was gradually led deeper into the woods. She had picked enough and was making ready to return to the house when she reached for the last few berries and suddenly found a man under her feet. She caught sight of his feet and legs and gave a little scream, but did not run away. On the contrary, she placed her bonnet on the ground and then grabbed the feet and pulled the rest of the man's body out into view. The next instant she exclaimed:

"So it's you, is it, you thieving critter?"

She had recognized Scott, the banker, at first glance, and, stepping over his prostrate body, she felt under his bushes and brought out a bulky sachet. "Well, what have you got to say for yourself?" she asked as he maintained a sulky silence.

"I have sprained my ankle," he replied.

"I was wondering if the Lord would let you get away with Clara's money. You must have come here to hide last night till you could get away for good. I told James over and over that you'd turn out to be a thief. Why don't you lie and say you are not Scott?"

"It's no use; I have suffered all day and am about dead."

"Waah, that's a pint in your favor that you hadn't got to lie out of it. I'll give this sachet to the house and get help."

Things ended well for the depositors of Scott's bank, though the banker himself had to do a term of five years in state prison.

Long before he was put on trial, however, Clara's marriage came off, and she started on her "bridal tower." The happy couple were gone for two weeks, and the first one to sight them on their return was Aunt Judy. When she had kissed and hugged the happy bride she stood off and said:

"Now, then, sit right down and tell me all about Niagara falls. Is there barrels of water going to waste every day? Is there like a ocean of water? Did you feel mean and small when you stood and looked at 'em? Did a hack driver take you to 'leven different places and only charge 10 cents apiece? Come, he knew that you was related to me and that I was a dangerous woman to fool with? Tell me all about it and don't mind a thing."

"A Peching Echo."

"Fact often goes a great way in a case," said a lawyer. "I know a man who defended an old fellow charged with stealing an armful of wood."

"The judge was very deaf and had a habit of talking to himself. Sometimes unconsciously he talked to himself in a prudish tone."

"Now, in this case when the prosecutor took the stand and identified his stolen wood with great positiveness the judge asked himself in a louder key than he was aware of:

"How can he identify this wood when one stick's as much like another stick as one egg like another?"

"The tactful lawyer for the defense rose immediately."

"Your honor," he exclaimed passionately, "how can this witness identify his wood so positively when one stick is as much like another stick as one egg like another?"

"The judge turned to the jury, with a great start:

"Gentlemen," he said, "you will acquitted the prisoner. That very thought dashed through my head not a moment before the words were spoken by the learned counsel for the defense. Yes, you will acquit the prisoner, gentlemen. I consider this a direct interposition of Providence."

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